Ministers Disappointed by Lack of Progress in WTO Talks

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The Honourable David L. Emerson, Minister of International Trade, and the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, today expressed their disappointment at the lack of progress in WTO Doha Development Agenda negotiations at an informal meeting of ministers this week in Geneva, Switzerland. Ministers representing key WTO members met to try to advance key issues in agriculture and non-agricultural market-access negotiations.

"While WTO members have worked hard to reach an agreement, the gaps among members' negotiating positions proved to be too great to bridge during this meeting," said Minister Emerson. "Open economies like Canada's have much to gain from the multilateral trading system, and we will continue to work closely with other WTO members to resolve differences in these negotiations."

"We came here looking for a positive outcome for Canada's entire agriculture sector, including supply-managed and export-oriented industries," said Minister Strahl. "An ambitious conclusion to the Doha Round is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that is in the best interests of not only Canadian farmers but developing nations as well."

Canada continues to support an ambitious outcome to the Doha negotiations as our economic prosperity, now and in the future, depends upon enhancing access to global markets for Canadian manufactured and agricultural goods, services, and natural resources. The WTO also provides the best forum to better integrate developing countries into the global economy.

Despite the lack of progress at this meeting, the Doha negotiations are not finished. Canada will remain fully engaged and work closely with other WTO members to promote our interests in these negotiations. We urge members to redouble their efforts to resolve differences on key issues, including tariff-reduction formulas, agricultural subsidies, as well as the selection and treatment of sensitive and special products.

To ensure our future economic prosperity, we will build on multilateral efforts by continuing to pursue regional and bilateral trade initiatives.

Ministers appreciated the support of the large number of provincial representatives and industry stakeholders present in Geneva. Their presence clearly displays the importance of these negotiations to Canadians, and the Government of Canada will continue to actively consult with our stakeholders as the negotiations progress.

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